

The President's Weekly Address

July 16, 2016

Hi, everybody. It's been a challenging couple of weeks: the shootings in Minnesota and Baton Rouge, the protests, the targeting and murder of police officers in Dallas. It's left all of us struggling to make sense of things at times. Now, I know that for many, it can feel like the deepest faultlines of our democracy have suddenly been exposed and even widened.

But the America I know—the America I saw this week—is just not as divided as some folks try to insist. I saw it on Monday, when I met with law enforcement to talk about the challenges they face and how too often, we ask our police to do too much: to be social workers and teachers and guardians and drug counselors as well.

I saw it on Tuesday, when I traveled to Dallas for the memorial service for the five courageous officers who died in the line of duty, even as they were protecting protesters with whom they may have disagreed.

I saw it on Wednesday, when I hosted police chiefs, Black Lives Matter's activists, State and local leaders, and others for a discussion that lasted more than 4 hours, a discussion on more steps we can take to continue supporting the police who keep our streets safe and instill confidence that the law applies to everyone equally.

And I saw it on Thursday, at a town hall in DC, where we talked about how there is no contradiction between honoring police and recognizing the racial disparities that exist in our criminal justice system and trying to fix those discrepancies.

Now, these conversations were candid, they were challenging, even uncomfortable sometimes. But that's the point. We have to be able to talk about these things honestly and openly, not just in the comfort of our own circles, but with folks who look differently and think differently than we do. Otherwise, we'll never break this dangerous cycle. And that's what America's all about: not just finding policies that work, but forging consensus, fighting cynicism, and finding the political will to keep changing this country for the better.

That's what America gives us, all of us: the capacity to change. It won't happen overnight. The issues we're grappling with go back decades, even centuries. But if we can open our hearts to try and see ourselves in one another, if we can worry less about which side has been wronged and worry more about joining sides to do right, as equal parts of one American family, then I'm confident that together, we will lead our country to a better day.

Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:40 a.m. on July 15 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on July 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 15, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 16. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Subjects: Civil rights : Minorities :: Relations with police; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Law enforcement and crime : Community-oriented policing, strengthening efforts; Louisiana : Baton Rouge :: Death of Alton Sterling; Minnesota : Death of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights ; Texas : Dallas :: Shootings of law enforcement officers.

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